



News Release

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Strike team deployed to Yakima Valley for infection control support

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and the Yakima Health District (YHD) have been partnering for the last two weeks with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to improve infection control practices across the region in the effort to slow the spread of COVID-19.

On May 11, DOH deployed a team of ten infection specialists (eight DOH staff and two CDC staff) to support the Yakima Health District's response to COVID-19 on many fronts. The county has multiple outbreaks at long term care facilities, including nursing homes and adult family homes. Our healthcare associated infections team was deployed to arrange testing, cohort patients and provide guidance to these facilities. Upon arrival, Dr. Scott Lindquist, the team lead, requested an infection preventionist from CDC to support the nearly 30 adult family homes in the county to make sure they were following guidance and had adequate supplies of PPE and access to testing. Dr. Lindquist also requested one CDC epidemiologist to set up a data dashboard for the county (which should be finalized next week).

“Our priority, our focus, is to make sure we are able to prevent the spread of infection in places where people are in close quarters,” said Dr. Lindquist. “We realized that there was a need for additional support to do that successfully, which is why we requested extra support from the CDC.”

“We have actively engaged community and state partners to come together on behalf of Yakima County during COVID-19. We have worked with business community leaders to ensure organizations are meeting and exceeding public health recommendations. We are indebted to our local community health care clinics and hospitals who have worked diligently to care for ill patients and ensure timely and accessible testing. We recognize the unique and innovative

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solutions that local foundations and non-profits have supported to ensure that timely and accurate information is available to all of our community members. While we continue to struggle with COVID-19 outbreaks and growing numbers in Yakima County, we have quickly developed innovative solutions to help stop the spread across businesses, long-term care facilities, essential workers, and the general community,” said Andre Fresco, executive director of the Yakima Health District.

In addition to the outbreaks in congregate care settings, the team assessed outbreaks at a meat-packing plant, a fruit-packing plant and a jail. They offered infection control guidance for these facilities and visited seasonal farm worker housing and packing plants to provide masks and ensure testing plans were in place. The team is currently working with multiple state agencies to put together a comprehensive guidance document for farm workers. The team also met with both hospital systems to see where they could offer support.

DOH has established a call center to address questions from the public. If you have questions about what is happening in Washington state regarding COVID-19, please call 1-800-525-0127 and press #.

The [DOH website](#) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. [Find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#). Sign up for the DOH blog, [Public Health Connection](#).

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